

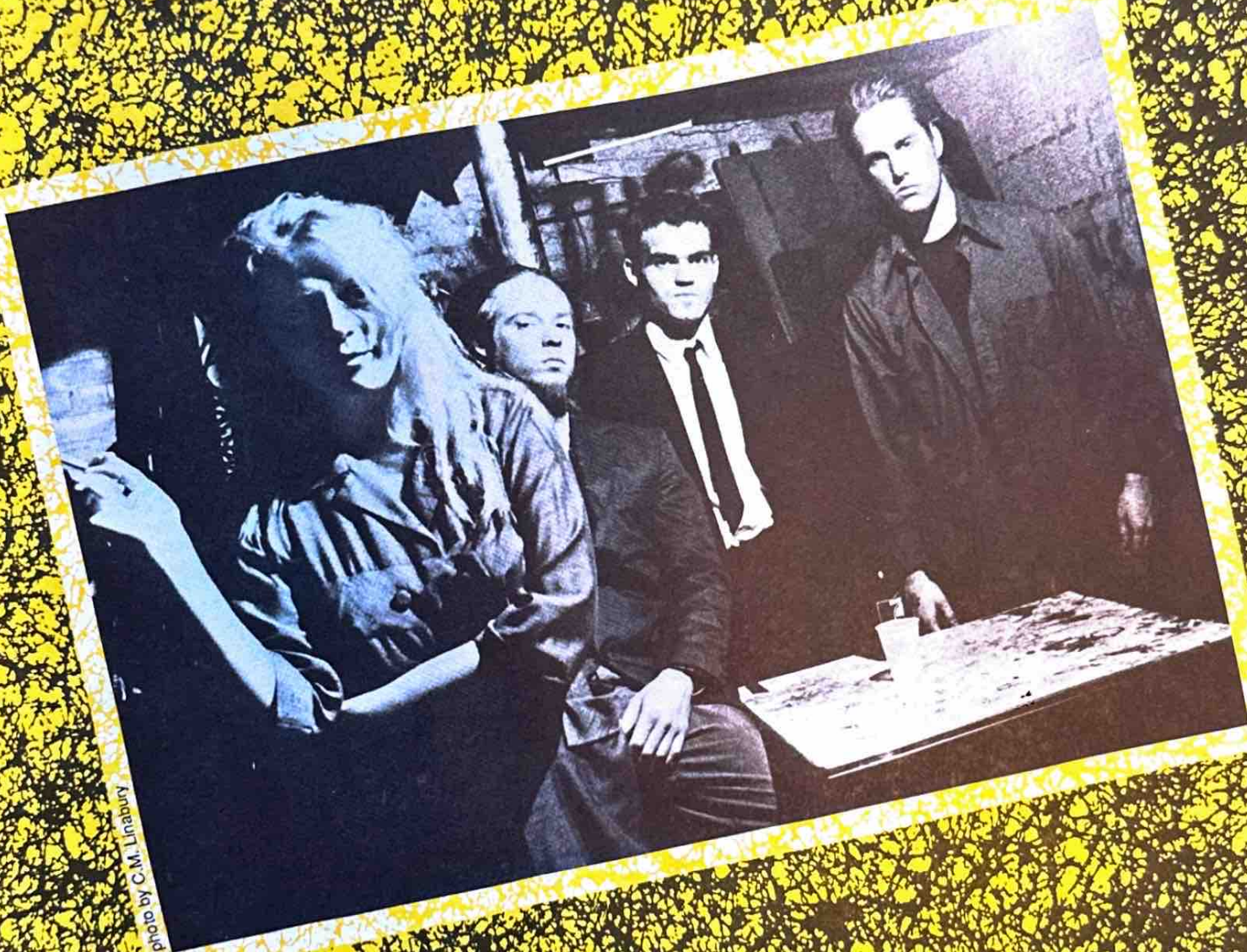
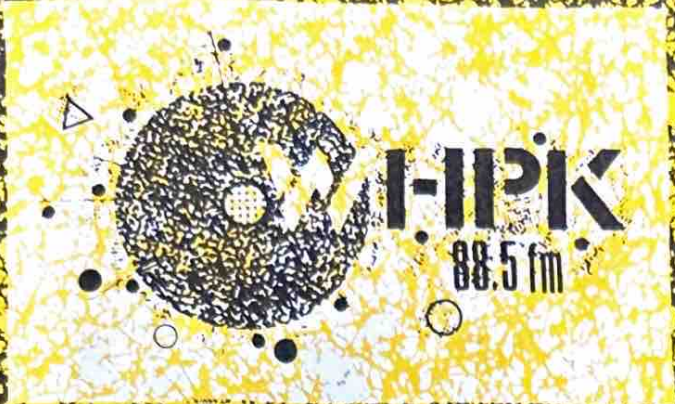
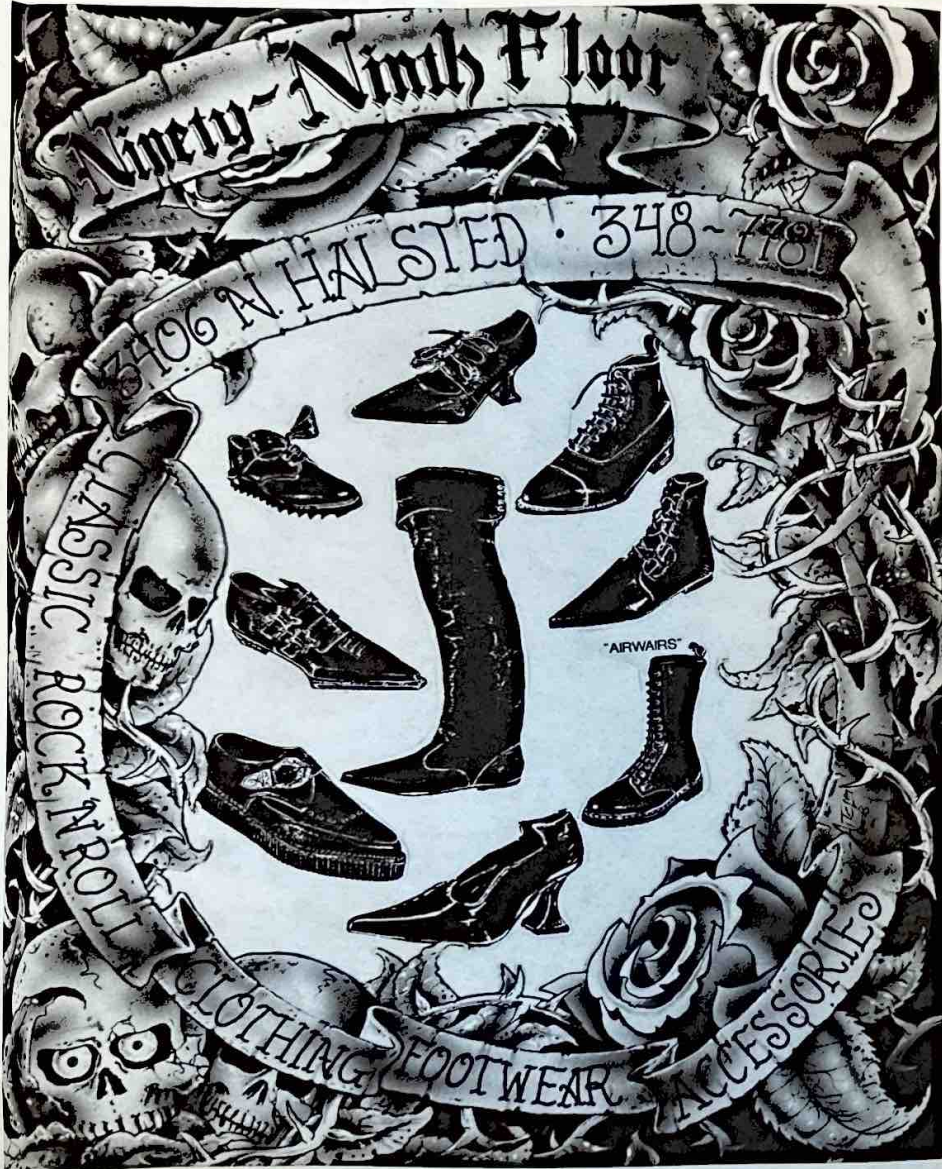


photo by C.M. Linbury

INSIDE:

**LAUGHING HYENAS
ALAN MCGEE
FISH AND ROSES
GANG STARR**



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POSITIVITY IN FULL EFFECT

From their humble beginnings in Boston, and having their first record distributed by K-Tel, Gang Starr have moved up in the hip-hop world. Their next two singles, with dope beat mixologist Mark, The 45 King (who also produces Lakim Shabazz, Latifah, and label mate Chill Rob G), brought a taste of what was to come. Finally, after dropping all of the other Boston members, lead rapper Keith E added Brooklynite DJ Premier as both DJ and co-producer. The def duo went on to record the rest of their mellow yet hype lp *No More Mr. Nice Guy* (Wild Pitch), which was released last summer. WHPK's J.P. Chill and Chilly Q spoke with Keith E and DJ Premier shortly before they left for London to tour with De La Soul in October.

JP: How did you get together, and how did you get hooked up with K-Tel Records for your first release, "The Lesson"?
 Keith E: Well, the group is called Gang Starr, and DJ Premier is the DJ and the beatmaker-creator-scientific warlord of the group. I am Keith E, the Guru, which stands for Gifted, or Gangster with Unlimited Rhymes that are Universal.

The first record, that was 'way back. Let me say, originally I came from Boston to New York in '84. I was with these other characters, a rapper and another DJ, and they're not down anymore. It's like this—some people want to be local yokels, some people want to go out and touch the world. I went to New York wholeheartedly in '84. I was young, my parents thought I was crazy,

and I took my money and everything. My parents gave me a couple of ducats but I'm saying most of it was my money that I worked and saved for. I went to New York and I struggled. I went to radio stations. I had friends up there 'cause I used to always go up there—I had places to stay. I was taking tapes everywhere, to every address that I could see on a rap record. That's what I want to say to people that are aspiring to be rappers from anyplace outside of New York, and now California's hooking people up. I still say things originated in New York and that's why I went there, because there were so many people I admired there.

My man DJ Premier, he's from Brooklyn. He was in college at Prairie View, in Texas. Let me tell you, it's also good to have something to fall back on. I went to school in Atlanta—Morehouse—in full effect. He (Premier) was sending tapes to the label (Wild Pitch). He had another rapper and that wasn't working out. His tapes were so great, I asked the owner of the label to hook me up with him and he put us together and we put together the album, *No More Mr. Nice Guy*, in a matter of two weeks.

Q: Do you care to mention the rapper that you used to be down with?

Keith: You know, he's still my homeboy and stuff, that's Dave E-ski, he's back in Boston, and this kid named Smitty and this other kid DJ Mike D. They call him 1 2 B Down, we call him Wanna Be Down. They tried to dis me, that's all I'm saying. It's like,

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POSITIVITY

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if we were ever to go to a court of law, he's still contracted to the label that Premier and myself are on. And it's like, why is he tryin' to keep a name (Gang Starr) that I brought to him? That's what happens, that's all I can say to you all. Don't let anyone hold you back from your dreams. 'Cause it's like

"...For me, the strength that I want to have, for all that I want to do, it had to come through New York."
—Keith E

we're playin' in the major leagues, and they're in the minors.

Q: You talked about California. This has kind of been the summer for West Coast rappers to come to light: Eazy-E, MC What's-his-name, Hammer, Ice T.

Keith: I can say one thing—a lot of those kind of rappers, not to be dissin' them or nothin', but a lot of them wouldn't have come out if it wasn't for their videos. Same with us, really; we got a lot more play because we've got a video. But still, the rhyme skills are there. We (in New York) work hard for the rhyme skills and then as soon as we establish new rhyme skills, the rappers in other cities try to do those same things, but they put their own personalities in it. I don't really want to dis them, but still the rhyme skills, the styles, originally come from New York.

Q: With rap now we see major labels getting involved and major labels bring what they call "salt" in the game. They want you to have this contemporary R&B sound or this commercial sound. Talk a little bit about how you feel about that sort of thing.

DJ Premier: Well, all I can say is, we will never do any crossover records, so to speak, or pop rap records. You'll never hear us do anything like "Walk This Way" or "Parents Don't Understand", although I think Jazzy Jeff's a dope DJ. But as far as the majors coming into rap music, a lot of majors have money, and I want money just like everybody else, but I'm not money-hungry. I'm not desperate.

Keith: There it is.
Premier: I don't feel that I should have to kiss ass to get paid. I want to work for mine just like any legal citizen. But at the same time, if I feel like I deserve it and I keep

working hard at it and I touch the people I'm trying to touch, then I don't see why I should change what I'm doing just to get over. I don't feel like I have to do a thing with Chubby Checker called "The Twist" just so that people will buy it or to get to the pop audience. I like pop music, I listen to rock and roll on the side. But as far as the music that I do in our group, I will never do anything other than rap music.

Keith: What we're trying to say to you is, become strong, correct, from the street, but also with a type of ministry.

Premier: Plus, the first album was done in two weeks. Wait 'til you hear the next one. The next one's not going to be anything like the first one.

Q: So after the "Manifest" remix, what's next?

Keith: We've got another single getting ready to come out and another video. The video is "Positivity" and the "12" is the "Positivity" remix along with the "No More Mr. Nice Guy" remix. They're nothing like the album versions.

JP: I wanted to ask you about your work with the 45 King 'cause he's done some great work with your stuff and he's had a lot of success with Lakim Shabazz, Chill Rob G, and Latifah. Why didn't he produce any of your new stuff?

Keith: We're branching off, like I said, with the addition of DJ Premier. Premier's a producer in his own right. He has an artist coming out on Wild Pitch. His name is Lord Finesse—he's from the Bronx, with crazy analytical rhymes. He's got a lot of creativity and you'll be looking out for him soon. One side is called "Baby, You're Nasty" and the other side is "Track the Movement".

Q: What kind of cuts are these—hardcore or club?

Premier: Strictly hardcore. He's like a little Big Daddy Kane, but his voice is totally different, so you wouldn't compare him to Kane.

JP: You said that you started off in Boston and moved to New York, and that's how you made it. Do you think that the only way to succeed, unless you're from L.A., New York, or Philadelphia, is to move to New York?

Keith: I think it's great that all these other rappers are coming out from all the other places, but I'm just saying for me, for the strength that I want to have, for all that I want to do, it had to come through New York. 'Cause I have all due respect for the pioneers and I wanted to go there to see them, meet them, mingle with them. That was what I wanted to do.

Q: You mentioned Latifah earlier?

Keith: I mean, like, I knew her and she knew me before we both came out with videos and before we both got known probably in Chi-Town. I mean, we used to go to clubs every week and stuff like that. De La Soul, Biz Markie, everybody was

there. I used to go see the Kane at the Albee Square Mall. I used to always frequent those clubs just to get known and that's what I'm saying that you miss. You can come from wherever you want but there's certain stuff you miss.

Q: This is true, because you ain't gonna see Kane here in no clubs.

Keith: That's what I'm sayin'. I got to see everybody, whoever. You name 'em, that come out of New York, I got to see 'em and chill with 'em. In the beginning I didn't get respect from everybody but I kept pluggin' and I've got Premier and he keeps pluggin' and now we're here, rubbin' elbows in Chi-Town.

Q: Are you happy with the organization you're with, as far as Wild Pitch and Stu Fine go? You've got your DJ as your producer. You're not with the 45 King. Are you happy as an artist now?

Keith: I'll tell you, I'm very happy. The funny thing is, it's like, the 45 King and all the other people I dealt with before I got Premier as my producer or co-producer, there's still a coolness between us because they see that we're not stoppin', they see the video. They're starting to give us respect from the way we're droppin' our stuff.

JP: In Chicago, rappers and people who listen to rap have a real dislike of house music. What are your feelings on that?

Premier: I listen to a lot of house music. I also listen to a lot of rap. If I had a choice, it would be rap. All I can say is, right now, I'm a rap person, and from the time that we speak, and there's no house clubs I'm goin' to today, so I'm 100% rap for the next 24 hours.

Q: We need something a little deeper than that—more commitment than 24 hours.

Premier: OK, just to make you happy,

"Learn more about your culture. That way, we won't keep fighting each other because of ignorance."
—DJ Premier

money, I'm anti-house, I hate house. House is outta here.

Keith: That's why we didn't put none on our album.

Premier: And none's gonna be on our next album. I don't feel like you have to do a house track just because it's the new thing.

Keith: And a lot of that pressure's coming from the labels.

Q: If you had a message for rappers who are trying to break into the market from Chicago, which is perceived as being very

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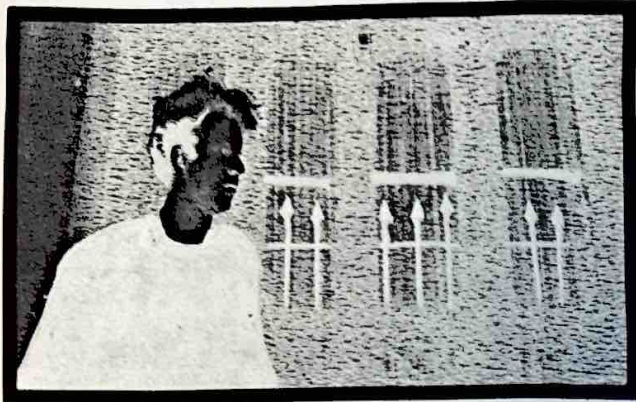
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PASS THE ECSTASY, HONEY



Creation Records and British guitar pop were synonymous until about two years ago, reflecting fast-paced music trends with a vengeance. One is now as apt to find fun hip-hop (Baby Amphetamine) or electronic voiceovers (Tangerine) as swirling feedback or acoustic guitars from a four-man setup. Perhaps the drug-induced fantasies of Alan McGee, Creation's founder and ringleader of Biff Bang Pow! and the Revolving Paint Dream, allow him to see more realistically than most and to vow never to take anything too seriously, including himself. Such is the prevalence of Ecstasy on music and lifestyles. In this conversation with WHPK's Mae Lum and John Schauer, Alan and his friend James Williamson, who heads up newly-formed Creation Press, manage to demolish any mystique about themselves and Creation artists as classy examples of everything good about independent British pop, proving once again it was all a press agent's wet dream.

This interview took place over breakfast in a Lower East Side restaurant, one fine July morning during the annual New Music Seminar in New York. It was a classic instance of a free-for-all peeing contest.

Mae: I want to ask you about something that you had said once, a long time ago. The incident was that you had just bought the Sex Pistols record "God Save the Queen", and you thought you were buying a revolution that would change music and society. As a label, how do you think Creation is leading a revolution, if it is meant to lead one?

Alan: No, I think at one point we were something like that—maybe about two or three years ago, we were ahead of some-

thing that was, like, happening. But now I don't think we are. Because I think what's happening in music now really, to be honest, is this house phenomenon. I think Creation has got tastes that are specific to people. Whereas I think we could encapsulate a feeling towards a whole movement of music two or three years ago, I don't think that's the case anymore. I don't think that means we're any less vital; I just think the

You can be into someone like Frankie Knuckles and someone like Todd Terry—and you can also be into the Doors and reggae. I mean, there's no rules.

actual rules have changed a lot, you know. **Mae:** So is that why you called your last record *The Acid House Album*?

Alan: That was just a joke.

Mae: I thought so. And what do you think about acid house?

Alan: I love it. My favorite kind of music. It's the only thing I listen to now, practically. I like deep house in particular.

Mae: A year ago, you'd said you were listening to the Rolling Stones' *Undercover*. So now we've leapfrogged right into the '80s.

Alan: Yep, I'm that type of guy.

Mae: Could that partly explain why Creation is coming out with dance records?

Alan: Yeah. But we're starting a dance

label called Chemical. We're still going to carry on Creation, because we're still into what all the bands are doing. We're starting a publishing company and I'm going to open an art gallery towards the end of the year in London. Just diversify into other things.

Mae: When was Chemical started?

Alan: A week ago.

Mae: Are you going to have to call yourself something else to put out house stuff on Chemical?

Alan: I don't think I can write that stuff, so I don't know. If I could write or make [those kind of] records, I would do it. I don't think I know how to do it yet. It'd be good fun to do it though.

Mae: There used to be a core of Creation bands that set the standard—like the Jasmine Minks and the Weather Prophets—but now you get bands like Pacific, who use sampled orchestration and of course, the notorious Baby Amphetamine. So what you're saying is that Creation is no longer synonymous with guitar-based pop?

Alan: It can be whatever it wants to be. It's just that it used to be a stylized sound, and now it's not anymore.

Mae: Has your feeling about Creation as a label changed then?

Alan: No, I mean, that's what I've said. Things around us have changed, but we've never really changed. That's the point I'm making: two years ago, we were ahead of something that was actually happening on a world-wide basis. I think, and now, I don't think we are. It's not because we've done anything wrong, it's just that things have changed around us. It's like the whole house thing has come up and is absolutely brilliant. But you can be into someone like Frankie Knuckles and someone like Todd Terry—and you can also be into the Doors and reggae. I mean, there's no rules. The thing that winds me up about people that like our records is that they're so narrow-minded because they can't get into house, they can't get into folk music, they can't get into jazz, and they can only like bands that are on an independent label. And it's a lot of bollocks, basically, because you can like whatever you like. That's the whole point of music, do you know what I mean? You can like someone like Inner City and you can like someone like the House of Love, you know; it's quite possible. So that's all I'm saying. My feeling toward Creation hasn't changed; I'm just getting more open-minded basically. You can be into anything. Maybe next week I'll be going to be into Charlie Parker.

Mae: But in the beginning, in the early '80s, when there was all this techno-pop stuff, it

was quite unusual to have Creation burst into the scene.

Alan: That's what I'm saying. That's right, it was, but that was just the surroundings. We haven't changed, we're still the same then as we are now. We're still into what we were into.

Mae: So now when you seek out established artists like the Jazz Butcher or My Bloody Valentine, what do you look for if it's not just that they do classy pop songs?

Alan: The only thing I've always looked for. I just like the music and whatever else. As long as you like it, you know, that's the main thing, so you can see what you can actually have. I mean, I don't care whether it sells, I just care if I actually like them.

Mae: Is it difficult for you when bands move on, like the Pastels, who are now on Chapter 22?

Alan: No, that was a godsend. The Pastels are crap.

Mae: The Pastels are crap?

Alan: They're garbage.

Mae: And the Bodines are now on Play Hard...

Alan: They're crap.

Mae: ...the House of Love have moved on to Fontana.

Alan: I manage the House of Love. I wanted them to stay on Creation, but they wanted to move because someone was offering them a huge amount of money. But after the move, they asked me to become their manager again. So that's what happened.

Mae: What is your relationship now with the (Jesus and) Mary Chain (whom he discovered and managed)?

Alan: It's a good relationship... (pause while two people scream obscenities at each other outside on the sidewalk)

Mae: This is New York.

Alan: (unfazed) I don't have a business relationship with them but I get on real well with them personally.

Mae: Could you verify something I've heard: do artists still get black leather jackets when they sign to Creation?

Alan: No, never have. No one's ever gotten one. I don't know where you get that from. I hate leather. I like baggy trousers, Ecstasy and large T-shirts and acid house. **Mae:** (incredulous) Ecstasy? Oh, come on.

Alan: What do you mean, come on? Have you got any?

James: That's what the artists get when they sign.

Alan: We give them free Ecstasy when they join the label.

(John laughs)

Mae: I was going to ask you, since you no longer do songs like "Inside the Mushroom" and "Five Minutes in the Life of Greenwood Goulding"...

Alan: That's when we used to do acid, but

now it's Ecstasy. We went slightly more upmarket these days.

Mae: What is "Five Minutes" all about?

Alan: Having sex in the shower.

Mae: I didn't get that at all, but okay. How did you come to run the *Elevation* label?

Alan: Uh, because...I don't know, that's a hard question. It'll take me too long. Basically, Warners had signed Primal Scream and the Weather Prophets and they wanted someone to run it, and they offered me like £50,000 to do it, so I did it.

Mae: Who else was on *Elevation*?

Alan: Edwyn Collins [formerly of Orange Juice]. When Edwyn Collins was on it, it felt

I like baggy trousers, Ecstasy and large T-shirts and acid house.

more like a museum than a record company. Let's face it, Edwyn is getting on a little bit in age, isn't he?

Mae: Have you heard the Pooh Sticks song about you ["I Know Someone Who Knows Someone Who Knows Alan McGee Quite Well"]?

Alan: Yep.

Mae: What do you think about it?

Alan: It's quite a good tune. Good subject matter.

Mae: So come on, there must be some kind of mystique about you, if someone is actually proud that they know someone who knows someone who knows Alan McGee quite well.

Alan: Yeah, it's all due to my press agent Jeff Barrett. [He's] the one who created the legend.

James: In his own image.

Alan: Yeah, I'm really Jeff Barrett, not Alan McGee, see.

Mae: What is the legend?

Alan: Well, you don't ask legends what the legend's about, do you? I mean, you don't say, "Iggy, why are you called Mr. Pop?" You just make it up. That's what pantomime is all about.

Mae: I guess a mystique is meant to remain one, or something like that. Well, on "Someone Stole My Wheels" and maybe one other record, you thank a J.C. Brouhard.

Alan: He's a French bloke that I used to know.

Mae: Was he a writer or a filmmaker?

Alan: He was an unemployed laborer.

Mae: What was his influence on you?

Alan: Drug-inspired. He used to send me the weirdest acid from France.

Mae: So essentially, he's your drug connection.

Alan: In France. I have drug connections all over the world.

Mae: Oh, that's good to know. What is it in New York?

Alan: Ecstasy. We're on Ecstasy at the moment, actually. We're feeling a bit weird.

Mae: I understand you probably have a very close relationship with the Revolving Paint Dream being that you're both derived from the Laughing Apple. But are you really in both bands?

Alan: I am both bands.

Mae: So the unnamed woman who sings the cover version of "The Beat Hotel" [on the "She Paints" ep] is really the woman from the Revolving Paint Dream?

Alan: That's my girlfriend, Debbie Turner. She's got a new album coming out called *I'm a Nail and I'm Okay*. (laughs)

Mae: (dissolving into giggles) You're just

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ECSTASY

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joking around, aren't you?

Alan: No, no, I'm serious. (still chuckling) The album is going to be known as The Debbie Turner Bitchy Experience, I'm a Nail and I'm Okay. It's on her own label, Havoc Records. Next question.

Mae: Did you get the name Biff Bang Pow! from Creation, the band?

Alan: Yep, I did.

Mae: How did you do the covers of The Acid

Only your vision goes pastel, but you don't actually get the free plastic bag.

House Album? [Each one is individually designed]

Alan: I've got a banana that paints.

Mae: I don't want to ask what that means. Since you have "The Girl from Well Lane" on The Acid House Album, are you coming out with an album soon with brand-new stuff?

Alan: Yep, we are. It's going to be called Touch Me, I'm a Doctor.

Mae: Are we regressing here?

Alan: That's the name of the album.

Mae: Well, I mean, when you're a kid, you play doctor or post office...

Alan: It's a bit deeper than that, actually. It's about taking drugs.

Mae: Oh, so you're getting back into that. Well, you never really left. You must be good friends with Genesis P-Orridge [of Psychic TV].

James: He lives next door. He's my next-door neighbor in Brighton.

John: That must be scary.

James: No, he's the nicest guy down there. Alan: He's making an acid house album called Havoc at the Controls about James Havoc, the writer.

Mae: [Back to your music], some of your lyrics can be kind of slap-in-the-face and yet you can be upbeat at the same time, like in "There Must Be a Better Life"...

Alan: I was trying to be Robert Smith [of the Cure] there, actually.

Mae: Robert Smith? No.

Alan: (realizing the joke is not working) Anyway, carry on.

Mae: You know the part that goes, "you think you can fuck my head up/well, I've news for you" and then you go on, singing a melody. How do you reconcile that?

Alan: What do you mean, how do you

reconcile that? I did that five years ago.

James: That's just the hammer and the nail, isn't it, Alan?

Mae: What does that mean, it's just the hammer and the nail?

James: You're either the hammer or you're the nail, basically, in life.

Alan: Basically, there are victims and there are victors.

James: And vixens.

Alan: You're either a victim or a victor.

Mae: So you're saying, in the song you're taking both points of view?

Alan: Yep.

Mae: How do you find time to do it all, to have your own bands and run the label?

Alan: Well, I hardly ever do anything but run bands. I just really run the label and manage some bands. That's what I do.

Mae: And Richard Green [also of Biff Bang Pow!] does all the day-to-day work.

Alan: Yeah, he does a few bits and pieces. He's actually in the middle of setting up an Ecstasy factory in England at this moment in time. We're going to have Creation chemicals next year.

Mae: In little pastel plastic bags, right?

James: Not necessarily.

Alan: No. Only your vision goes pastel, but you don't actually get the free plastic bag.

Mae: You should put one, a package in each album. Why do you think there's this obsession with Ecstasy, the '60s and acid house, stuff like that?

Alan: Why is there an obsession with Ecstasy? Because there's millions of people addicted to it, psychologically; it's brilliant, that's why.

Mae: It's just a symptom then.

Alan: What? It's just brilliant, it's the best drug going.

James: They just have private riots in England, people on E—over life. This is revolution. The papers are trying to suppress it but they can't. It's just spreading rapidly.

Mae: Is this a class revolution, or what?

Alan: No, it's classless.

Mae: England is not a classless society.

Alan: I know, but that's when you're on E.

James: That's what you get on E. It breaks down all the barriers.

Alan: The whole politics of the English government is isolationist. But to me, it's to go out and have a good time. And the thing is, when you go to the house clubs and get on Ecstasy, everyone has a good time.

Mae: But it's only temporary.

Alan: I know it's temporary, but what's wrong with something being temporary?

James: That's what life is, a series of instants.

Alan: I mean, are you living for now or are you living for the future? The thing is, I don't live for the future one inch, because I just live for sitting at this table now, and walking over that road and then going back to the hotel and then going to the music seminar

and then going on the train. I just live for today; I don't live for any other time. I live for the best moment.

Mae: Do you think you'd ever want to run another club like the Living Room? [August 1983-February 1984, London?]

Alan: Nope.

Mae: Do you think being a record company president and managing bands is much more suited to your talents then?

Alan: Nope.

Mae: Then what are you good at?

Alan: Taking drugs.

Mae: We're back to that again! (quickly changing the subject) [About the rules] I find that a lot of musical artists do say that there are no rules, no classifications, and they always criticize the press for trying to create categories...

Alan: That's right.

Mae: But I can see the reason why they would try, because what journalists try to do is explain things to the general public.

Alan: (impatiently) Yeah, I know, but the thing that is wrong about generalizing is, how can you theorize about things because the bottom line is, why music became shit was because other people intellectualized our music and it took all the bollocks out of our music. The nice thing about house music is, you can't intellectualize it, you know, because it's just about having a good time and dancing. And people have been doing that for like two thousand years and that's why it's brilliant.

Mae: I was hoping music could be intelligent as well as...

Alan: So who's an intelligent rock band?

Mae: (pause) I can't think of one.

Alan: Neither can I. Because they're all boring. That's what's wrong. I like pop music. I hate rock music. Pop music is good because it's fast and it's got high turnover. But the rock thing is boring; it's all about

The nice thing about house music is, you can't intellectualize it, because it's just about having a good time and dancing.

hierarchy, do you know what I mean? It's like, how many records have you sold and all that dumb shit. It's bollocks.

John: I wanted to ask about Momus [of Creation]. In "Hairstyle of the Devil", he's moved into disco.

Alan: He's moving into that sort of area.

Mae: Now, don't you think Momus is intelligent?

Alan: No, not really. I mean, he's a nice

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IT'S A HELL OF A LOT BETTER THAN WORKING AT 7-ELEVEN

It's almost the '90s, and "loud" and "intense" have become rock 'n' roll synonyms for "boring". For far too many bands, an affinity with the Detroit/Ann Arbor sound of the early '70s seems a license to bypass originality and creativity in favor of long hair and loud amps. While the **Laughing Hyenas** are not the most innovative combo in the history of rock music, they're far too committed to rest on the laurels of stylistic signatures which they didn't even invent. If you haven't heard their two records ("Merry-Go-Round" ep and *You Can't Pray a Lie* lp, both released on Touch and Go Records), you've missed out on fourteen slices of gut-level life observance—harsh, spiritually rich songs which are inspired by an amazing amount of violent emotional depth. If you've never seen the **Laughing Hyenas** perform—well, you're really not aware of how dangerously far the parameters of the idiot art of rock music can be pushed.

The Players:

John Brannon, vocals
Kevin Strickland, bass
Jim Kimball, drums
Larissa Strickland, guitar (walked out of the interview after the first question)

The Interrogators:

Mike Newirth
Nathan Ferguson
Anthony Star

Mike: How did the **Laughing Hyenas** start?
Jim: John was at a 7-Eleven once.

Mike: I mean, what did **Laughing Hyenas** have to do with L7 (Larissa's former band) and *Negative Approach* (John's former band)?

John: Our band broke up, and we put this band together. Larissa and I were living together. L7 and *Negative Approach* used to practice in the same place. After both of our bands broke up, we decided to do something together.

Mike: When was this?

Kevin: January '85.

Mike: Were either Jim or Kevin in any bands at that time?

Jim: A bunch of shitty bands.

Mike: What did people who had been into *Negative Approach* and L7 think of the **Laughing Hyenas**?

John: They pretty much hated us. It went different ways with some people. Some people could see it—they could deal with the transition. Other people just wanted NA to be NA, and me just to be me, singing those songs. Some people dealt with it, some people hated

it, some people heard us who had never heard NA.

Mike: When you started out, were a lot of people coming to shows and acting very surprised?

John: At the first few gigs, we pretty much had the audience from NA coming to check us out, and when they saw us they decided that we sucked. That kind of thinned out our audience, and we started over, and got a following as **Laughing Hyenas**.

Mike: This was in Detroit, right?

John: Yeah. We're originally from Detroit, and then we moved to Ann Arbor. That's where the band started going; it's also where we got Jim. We had another drummer originally.

Mike: What was the story with the change?
John: He knocked up this chick and she had triplets. (laughs) No, seriously, it was family life...he put down his sticks and picked up a baby bottle.

Mike: You had the "Merry-Go-Round" material recorded long before it came out on *Touch and Go*. I first read about your demo tapes in '86. What happened with that?

John: We had a whole different version of "Merry-Go-Round" with our other drummer. And we hooked up with this label that just fucked us over.

Mike: *Adult Contemporary*?

John: Yeah, and it (the release) never happened. The guy had no money...

Mike: They also fucked over *Dig Dat Hole* and *Drunks With Guns*. *Dig Dat Hole* never got a record out at all...

Kevin: We played with them.

Nathan: How did you guys wind up on *Touch and Go*?

John: OK, what happened after that? We moved to Ann Arbor, our drummer left, we got Jim...We decided it was a new band with a new drummer, so we decided to re-record "Merry-Go-Round" with the current lineup. Corey (Rusk, who runs *Touch and Go*) heard the tape and liked it. Actually, he heard a tape of the first version and didn't like the versions, but liked the songs. We mixed the first version—we didn't know what the fuck we were doing.

Mike: There's a big difference between the two?

John: Yeah, we did it in a different studio. We kind of rushed it just to have a record out. It sounded real sloppy.

Mike: Were you selling dups of the first demo?

John: We didn't sell...anybody who wanted a copy, I just dubbed it.

Mike: So that's how the **Laughing Hyenas** ended up on *Touch and Go*.

John: Well, *Negative Approach* and L7 were on *Touch and Go*, so we went "way back."

Mike: Do you still get calls for all the early *Touch and Go* records, the collector's items? Do people bug you for that?

John: People write me all the time. They're like, "Please send me all live tapes and unreleased material you have, and if you have any T-shirts please send T-shirts." I just read some mail today from some kid who wants me to send him all this shit.

Anthony: Are you going to send him anything?

John: Sometimes I do.

Mike: What happened after "Merry-Go-Round" came out?

John: We did a lot of touring. We did a few gigs with *Pussy Galore*... We'd go out for, like, two weeks. We did a big tour with *Sonic Youth* (during the fall of 1988).

Mike: When "Merry-Go-Round" came out, were you getting a lot of [press] reaction?
John: We had a lot of press before that came out, just because of the tapes. People had heard the name so they came to the shows.

Mike: Was it selling well?

John: No. We don't sell a lot of records. People like our live gigs, but they hate our records.

Anthony: How do you do compared to other *Touch and Go* acts?

John: That's kind of hard to say. I don't know how many records they're selling. We're obviously not selling as many as *Killdozer* or *Big Black*.

Nathan: Did you start writing material for *You Can't Pray a Lie* immediately after the first ep?

John: We had some of the songs already written, like "Love's My Only Crime". As soon as Jim joined the band, we started writing a lot of good songs.

Nathan: How do you guys go about writing songs? It seems like on "Merry-Go-Round", a lot of it is based on bass lines.

John: That's pretty much how we're doing it right now.

Kevin: A lot of it starts out as a bass line.

Anthony (to Kevin): Do you start out with the bass line?

Kevin: Usually, I come up with the bass line to start off with, but not always—for instance, "That Girl" is John's line.

John: Sometimes I have a real rough idea, or Larissa might have a part and she will show us.

Kevin: Everybody comes up with their own part.

John: That's pretty much how we write everything.

Kevin: It starts off with a bass line...

John: ...and it's a layering effect from there. It might start out with a drum beat, then Kevin will follow with a bass line. There'll be one solid part going, and everybody puts their own part on top of it...I do a lot of the arranging, because we do a lot of it around the lyrics—vocal cues.

Kevin: It's like sitting around a table, and talking about what we're going to do with the song. Everybody is responsible for their own part, but we all influence each other in order to come up with the final product. If I don't like Jim playing the cymbals, I might tell him not to play the cymbals in this part. And he'll say, "I

really think I should," and everybody else puts in what they think about it. We end up eventually with a song we're all happy with.

John: We usually take one riff and jam on it for half an hour. We take the best parts of it out, and we jam out on the parts, and we strip it down to what sounds the best.

Nathan: The lyrics come later?

John: I might have something written ahead of time.

Anthony: Do you write all the lyrics?

John: I write most of them, and sometimes Larissa helps. I write, like, 80%. Larissa writes a lot. I might take a section (of Larissa's lyrics) and work it into something I'm writing.

Mike: Your lyrics are a lot more distinguished than most bands [of your type]. I find the songs to be real specific and evocative.

Kevin: He used to write them in the bathroom at work.

John: When we first write, it's mostly ad-lib. They'll have a riff going, and I'll make shit up. I'll pick out words that sound good in my head.

Mike: A lot of it reminds me of stuff in film, like real dark imagery.

John: (pauses) Yeah, OK. (laughs) I think it's more from real life than from films. A lot of it has to do with our own environment.

Mike: Do you want to elaborate at all?

John: No.

Kevin: Truth is stranger than fiction a lot of the time.

Nathan: About the live shows—you guys have quite a stage presence.

John: It's just who we are.

Kevin: It's not contrived.

John: It's not a put-on—it's how we feel. We feel we can express ourselves best through music. That's why it comes on so strong.

Nathan: It's something that everybody remembers about the shows.

John: It's what we like to do. It's what we're living for right now.

Mike: What sorts of reactions do you get at shows?

John: It varies. Sometimes people just stand

there and look at us, and sometimes they get real violent.

Jim: What about the lady in Boston?

Anthony: Oh yeah, that crazy woman. Did you know her before the show?

Kevin: She followed us from Philadelphia.

John: She grabbed my nuts on stage. She hit Jim with a chain. Jim fucking put her out.

Anthony: It seemed like you weren't too friendly with her.

John: That whole weekend...This other chick got on stage and started taking her clothes off.

Kevin: We thought she worked there. (laughs)

Nathan: Can you guys tell a big difference between being an opening band and headlining?

John: We're not really hung up on the pecking-order deal. We pretty much just play. Last night we played in a dude's basement, and there were, like, 200 people there, a furnace in the middle of the room. Tonight we're playing this big club.

Mike: So you don't give a whole lot of thought to a live show before you go out and do it?

John: No, we just hope there's a good PA there. We just set up and play. You can make a good show anywhere.

Kevin: We need to make sure our equipment works.

Mike: About the new record—I think it sounds pretty different (from "Merry-Go-Round"). I can't tell if it's the songwriting or the production, but I think *You Can't Pray a Lie* has a much more compressed sound, like it's a lot more wild, but using the same sort of song structures.

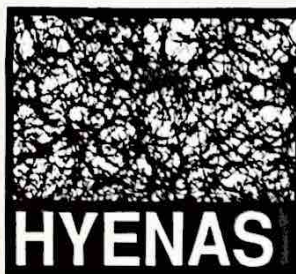
John: We got a lot better technically. **Jim:** We were a lot more comfortable the second time we got in the studio. When we recorded "Merry-Go-Round" I'd only been in the band for six months. So it was a lot tighter this time.

Nathan: You were working with Butch Vig?

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Photo by Mary Perez



HYENAS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

Kevin: He lets us do whatever we want to do, and he's been very helpful. We'd like to do another record with him.

Mike: Do you record on 16-track?

John: Yeah.

Kevin: We do everything live as much as possible. Live PA; my amps direct in line; Larissa's live; everybody's live. One take, two takes.

John: We did do overdubs. There are parts where I'd fuck up my vocals, and we'd go back and redo them. Or Larissa would do two guitar parts on a track. But basically everything else was live.

Mike: When I heard You Can't Pray a Lie, I thought it was less accessible.

John: You thought it was less accessible? Really?

Mike: Yeah, I thought it was more fucked up.

John: We don't know about that. We just wanted it to be better.

Kevin: We weren't trying to be more accessible or less.

John: Accessible is one of the last things you could call us.

Nathan: What kind of relationship do you have outside of the band?

John: We all live together. Jim lived with us, but he just moved out. We've got a house, and we practice there. The three of us live together. We don't really hang out with anybody in Ann Arbor—we pretty much stay to ourselves.

Mike: Are you guys near the University of Michigan?

John: We're like a mile off campus.

Mike: What do you think of the students?

John: We stay away from them.

Anthony: What do they think of you?

Kevin: They say a lot about us. That whole town's fucked up.

Jim: There are some people who are cool. I've lived there my whole life so I know a lot of people.

Nathan: Do you play at all on campus?

John: We haven't played in Michigan in, like, five months. We were supposed to play an Ann Arbor gig a couple of weeks ago, but the club got shut down. They remodeled it, and bricked up a fire exit. So they shut down the club for repairs, and it

fucked up our gig. There aren't a whole lot of places to play in Detroit that are reliable. Mike: Detroit Rock City?

John: It might be Detroit Rock City, but it's not Detroit Club City. There's no place to play where anybody's going to be straight with you. Real shady people.

Mike (to John): So how long have you and Larissa been together?

John: About seven or eight years. We've known each other since, like, the early '80s. Like I said, both NA and L7 practiced in the same place.

Mike: She played guitar?

John: No, she sang. They put out a single—a three-song 7". It's ultra-rare.

Mike: Sometimes I think about selling my rare stuff so that I can have the money.

Jim: That's how we're paying for our European tour.

John: We're going to Europe with Kill-dozer.

Anthony: Are you selling your own records or those by other bands?

John: We're selling whatever we can. We sold everything we have to fucking do this European tour. We're pretty much broke... We're doing 21 gigs in 22 days. Germany, Belgium, Holland, Amsterdam, England...

Mike: Have you been over there before?

John: No, I've never been to Europe before. Larissa has, and Jim's been to Germany.

Nathan: What size clubs are you going to play over there?

John: I have no idea.

Kevin: There'll be some basements probably.

Anthony: They treat bands a lot better than American clubs do.

John: Oh, yeah. We get a case of beer every night, hotels, and food. They rent equipment. Space Cakes in Amsterdam.

Mike: Space Cakes? You should keep a tour diary.

John: We'll be too fucked up.

Nathan: What kinds of music do you like to listen to?

Jim: Warrant. (laughs)

John: We listen to a lot of different kinds. We don't limit ourselves—we listen to blues, R&B, country, pop, jazz...

Mike: How do you react when you see stuff written that says you guys are rehashing stuff like Birthday Party and Scratch Acid?

John: Those are bands we like, bands that influenced us. Everything we listen to influences us.

Kevin: Most of the bands we're influenced by are rehashes. They're influenced by American blues bands, but when we get our inspiration from those blues bands, it gets turned around to be that we're influenced by the Stooges and the Birthday Party, when actually they were influenced by the same people we were. The Stooges thing is primarily because we're from Ann Arbor.

Mike: Any other influences you'd claim? Kevin: Shangri-Las, Howling Wolf, Lead-belly.

John: There's so much shit that we really don't want to give you a name, 'cause it'll be like, the Laughing Hyenas are only into this—that's where they got everything from. Mike: Is there any new stuff you've gotten into?

John: We pretty much don't listen to anything new.

Mike: Do you guys have day jobs?

John: No.

Jim: I do. I'm a prep cook at a restaurant.

Mike: What sort of real life experiences feed into the Laughing Hyenas?

John: It's all real-life experiences.

Kevin: Blacking out.

Nathan: Any misconceptions about the band you'd like to clear up?

Kevin: We don't always lose when we gamble.

Mike: What's with the gambling motifs? You throw out a deck of cards at every show.

John: Not every show. We're not that rich.

Mike: The first two times I saw you, I caught the same card twice—the ace of clubs.

Kevin: There you go, man—you're chosen. You should see the deck he's got tonight. Naked Japanese women.

Mike: What do you do when you're not making music?

Jim: I like to wind-surf.

John: Get fucked up and watch TV. We're fucking Middle-American burnouts.

Mike: Anything good on these days?

John: Anything on cable, man—it doesn't matter. Animal documentaries are really big in our house. We're really into Marlon Perkins.

Nathan: What's keeping the band going?

John: Drugs.

Mike: What makes it worth it?

Jim: It's fun.

John: Being able to write music; playing live is the payoff. There's so much other bullshit involved that doing the gigs right now is the best. We just want to write music; we don't like what's out there, so we're trying to fuck up some people's lives.

Kevin: This is what we've got going. It's a hell of a lot better than working at 7-Eleven. Mike: That's probably true.

John: Then again, if you work at 7-Eleven you can fucking drink Slurpees all day.

Kevin: Then again, if you work at 7-Eleven you might be able to pay your rent, which is better than we do most of the time.

Mike: Any plans for further recording?

John: Yeah, Touch and Go wants us to do an album as soon as we're ready, so we're trying to get our shit together and write some more songs.

Mike: Any messages for the youth of America?

John and Kevin: We're not fucking role models.

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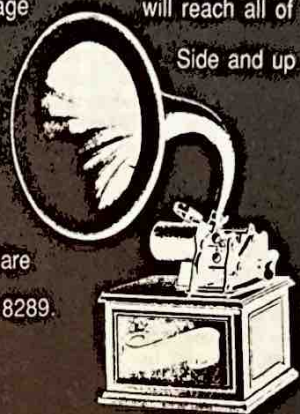
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FISH AND ROSES AND FRIED RICE

They don't have a big following among heavy-spending college students, although fans of the mysterious Lost Records generally like them. They don't have a guitar, either, although baseball fan Ira Kaplan sometimes lends his talents in that department. They do have two unusual and thoroughly appealing records, the first a self-titled ep on Lost, the second a full-length one called *We Are Happy to Serve You* on Homestead. They also have a fascinating way of understating themselves on stage, which caught and held the senses of the audience at Edge of the Lookingglass, where they played last summer. That night, WHPK's Tom Braden and Marianne Potje spoke with all three band members: Rick Brown, who plays mainly drums; Sue Garner, who plays mainly bass; and Dave Sutter, who plays mainly keyboards. After spreading the word about the new Bo Diddley record coming out on Triple X, the band talked about their own music for a while, too.

Rick was quick to mention that he doesn't think Fish & Roses sound anything like Mofungo or The Scene is Now, the two most prominent outfits associated with Lost Records. While people occasionally mistake him for someone in Mofungo, the band does enjoy an audience which knows how to distinguish them from legions of artsy New York loft bands.

They usually play The Knitting Factory or CBGB's, which they all agreed is still a great club, but usually prefer playing in performance spaces, as they did when Southend Music Works presented their first Chicago show. They are enthusiastic about Chicago's opportunities for lesser-known bands to play in clubs, which apparently are more encouraging than New York's. Rick said that the scene there has too many bands and too few places to play, with "a lot of places we play one time and then they either close or they're so screwed up that...we just don't go back."

In the studio, Fish & Roses like to tinker around, and wish they had the budget and the extra time to explore the options of technology. "It's hard to resist all those buttons," says Dave. He and Rick disagree on the question of whether to make live recordings, using an empty club and a small number of takes, since Rick doesn't think their live sound translates well onto tape. But all of the members said they were willing to try the idea, as well as to try new studio experiments, so listeners can look forward to new shifts in the band's sound.

Their writing style is changing, too, as Sue and Rick begin to contribute more of the lyrics and melodies, which they sing most often. On the last record, the songs became longer and less predictable than those on the ep, and Sue attributed the change to more complicated, planned song structures. Cleverly enough, parts of the songs sound loose enough to be improvisational, which they are not, as Sue told us, although she wished they could have been. The band usually writes songs by jamming

at rehearsals, linking up what Sue calls "a million little bits" which each member brings up. On record, many of these bits include parts for Sue's guitar, fiddle and harmonica; and Rick's caca-phone, also known as "that noise", an instrument he made from an old tape machine and used on "Emergency Exit" and "Have a Nice Day and Fried Rice". "I don't really know what's going on inside...but I kinda turned [the tape player] inside out and it makes a lot of noise. And I blew out a channel of Martin Bisi's 24-track board with it!"

All of the band members participate in other musical projects; Sue Garner's current one is an all-female country trio called the Shams, which she described as "very song-oriented and fairly traditional"—unfortunately, no vinyl yet, and live performances usually on the East Coast only. Sue said she liked modern country's trend away from the pop sound, and really loves Eugene Chadbourne's efforts in that area. Rick, once again eager to argue, criticized the camps making the trek back to country roots as too gimmicky and calculated. Either way, Sue's country leanings definitely give her vocals a certain lilt, as in the song "Booth", where they contrast very prettily with the electric sounds around them.

As for their work with Lost Records, Fish & Roses are uncertain what, if anything, will be the next project. The Scene is Now have just finished a new record, which Rick assured is great, but they probably won't put it out on Lost. Rick said he'd like to take over the label and its distribution, which Twin/Tone will no longer handle, but sounded skeptical since everyone in the band has a job as well as outside projects. "And we like to sit around, too," Rick said. See, they're just like you an' me.

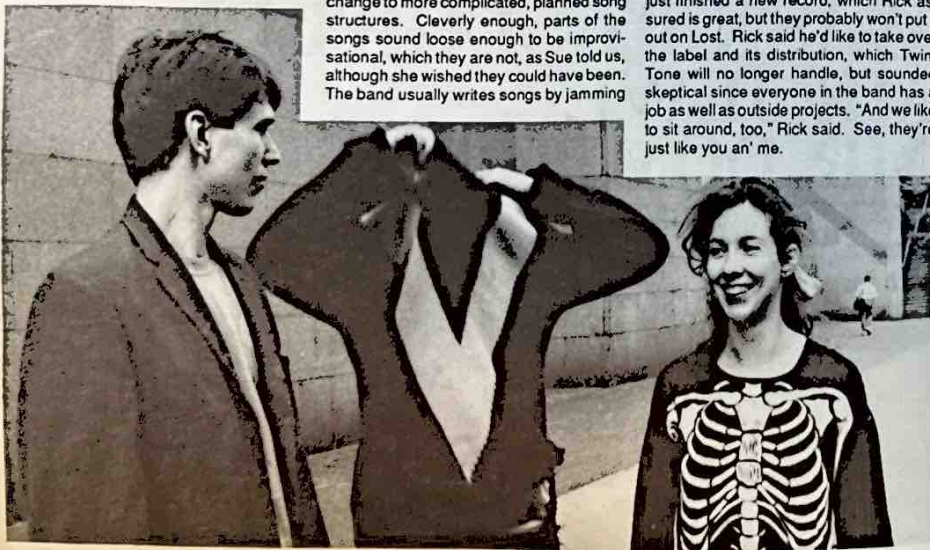
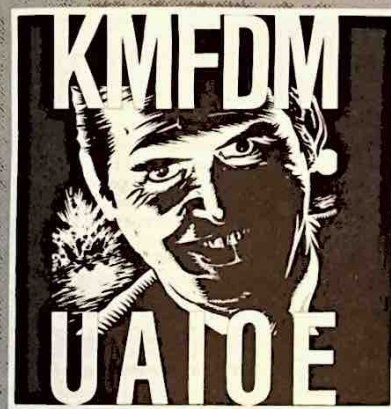


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Biff Bang Pow! (L-R): Philip King, Ken Popple, Richard Green and Alan McGee.

ECSTASY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

guy. What do you mean by intelligent?

James: Self-obsessed?

Mae: Self-obsessed? No. He thinks about the world, he reads a lot...

Alan: I know, fair enough, he does. But also he likes making records that make people dance. It's like, he wants to be popular on the dancefloors, he doesn't give a shit what books you've read. He doesn't care at all. You should talk to him about that. He's intelligent, but he's not any more intelligent than anyone else we've got on the label.

John: (to James) What sort of things will Creation Press be publishing?

James: Books about Satan, stuff like that. Satan controls Ecstasy. Ecstasy increases your intelligence level when you take it.

Mae (to John): What's the name of the devil that Momus mentions in "Hairstyle of the Devil"?

John: Beelzebub. It's just hilarious.

James: He's only a minor devil.

Mae: What's the major devil?

James: The goat of Mendes.

Alan: He has three heads.

James: It's a man with a goat's head, goat's legs and deranged genitals that speak to you. [Creation Press] will publish anything as long as it's not literature, basically. 'Cause literature died about two weeks ago. We had a big E-party to celebrate its death. So all that was left was the imagination, so that's where we're at.

Mae: What do you think about William S. Burroughs?

James: I love him.

Alan: Who is he?

Mae: (admonishing) He's a writer.

James: He's my uncle.

Mae: He's my father! No.

James: He's the most intelligent man in America. He likes lemurs. They're beautiful animals that come from Madagascar. Madagascar is an island off the coast of Africa; it's the best place on Earth. It's where the pirates used to live. A guy called Captain Mission founded a colony there; he was the first Communist. (Mae smirks) It's true. That's why Burroughs is into lemurs.

Mae: You guys have a weird view of the world.

Alan: Why?

Mae: I guess I've just been going to school for too long or something. Why did you call me a pervert on the phone yesterday for having most of the Creation catalogue?

Alan: It was just a joke. It's good to be a pervert. That's a compliment.

John: As long as you're a "Tender Pervert" [the title of Momus's last album].

Alan: There's no such thing as perversion anyway. If you put a camera in every single person's bedroom, then we're all perverts. Do you know what I'm saying? What is a pervert? Who is to say what's right and what's wrong?

Mae: Even those considered in the majority have some characteristic that would put them in the minority.

Alan: They're the biggest perverts going. Think of the depression—they love being in it. I mean, none of these people are having a good time. That's the biggest perversion going.

James: They're all murderers of the spirit, assassins of liberty.

Mae: You must have strong opinions about American politics being that [Prime Minister] Margaret Thatcher is sometimes considered the President's lapdog.

Alan: We don't have any views about politics other than that it's immaterial what party is in power because the Establishment controls the political parties anyway. So it's completely immaterial who's in power because you're never going to change it, so you just get on with your own life.

Mae: Do you believe in the conspiracy theory?

Alan: I think they probably are [all in a conspiracy]. I don't believe in any theory, but I think it's just corporation-controlled, and then political parties. No one's bigger than the person who owns America or owns England.

John: One last thing about Creation Press printing Satanist literature: are you doing anything with people from Current 93 or anyone like that?

James: No, they're just dabblers, I think. We have black masses on Brighton Beach, and they don't. They sacrifice tarfish.

[The interviewers thank Mark Ferguson for ensuring the accuracy of Messrs. McGee and Williamson's words—spoken in heavy Scottish accents and replete with British idioms—in this transcript.]

POSITIVITY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

Midwestern—we're not West Coast, we're not East Coast, but we don't live on farms and we do have ghettos—what would that message be?

Premier: First of all, make sure if you want to be a rapper—this is what you want to do. If you're not serious and you're not sure that this is what you want to do in your future, then don't do it. Listen to it, buy the tapes, but don't go into it unless you're really serious about being a rapper. Secondly, education is very important. And for all you Black people out there, know your Black history. If you don't see it in school, then go research it in the library. Learn more about your culture. That way, we won't keep fighting each other because of ignorance.

Kelth: I would say, try to have positivity. Believe in yourself. If you're really positive and you know you've got something goin' on, don't let anyone hold you back.

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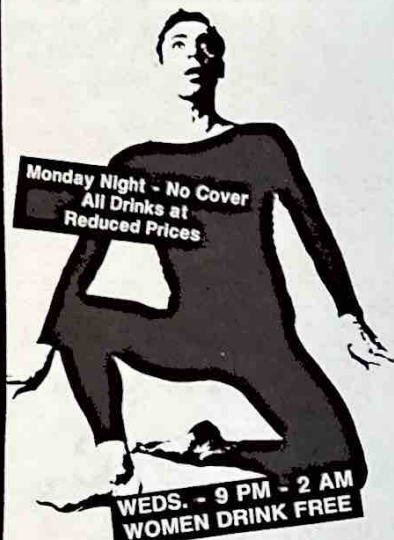
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ATTENTION STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

The deadline to apply for Winter Quarter meeting space in Ida Noyes Hall and Cobb Hall is Monday, November 20. Forms are available in Ida Noyes, Room 210. All forms submitted between 8:30 and 9:00 am on that day will be handled by a lottery. All other requests will be first come, first served.

FOR MORE INFORMATION,
CALL 702-9554.

WHPK 88.5 FM SCHEDULE: AUTUMN 1989

	SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	
12 midnight			BLUES	RADIO DADA	RAP	STAGE-DIVE		12 midnight
1	BLUES	JAZZ	ROCK				RAP	1
2								2
3								3
4	GOSPEL							4
5								5
6								6
7	JAZZ						JAZZ	7
8								8
9								9
10								10
11								11
12 noon								12 noon
1							REGGAE	1
2								2
3								3
4								4
5								5
6								6
7								7
8								8
9								9
10								10
11								11
12 midnight								12 midnight

